1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

SOCIAL CUSTOMS.

000 The Gros Ventre system of terms of relationship has been given in a 605 former publication.[1]

601 Cousins, so far as the relationship was known, were called brothers and sisters, and they called each other's children son or daughter if the cousin [582] was of the same sex as the speaker, or nephew or niece if the cousin was of the opposite sex. Any known relationship was a bar to marriage. The [587] brother of a dead man sometimes married his widow, but this was not always the case.

583 Large amounts of property, especially horses, were given away for wives for the honor of the act, but there was no rule or definite custom covering the quantity of property so given. The horses might be given not only to the father, but to the brothers, uncles, and other relatives of the girl. Sometimes, without having received any gifts and apparently without any previous understanding, a man would give his daughter to a young man, who thereupon would give him horses, or distribute them among his wife's other relatives. Old men practised this custom in order to obtain the aid and services of a young man in caring for their horses and in other ways, and no doubt 585 sometimes also to insure a more certain food-supply. A young man on 431 marrying received a tent with all the proper furniture, usually from his prospective parents-in-law, but sometimes from his own parents, if they were the wealthier.

606 Although a young married man often lived with his father-in-law, the [591] well-known taboo custom between mother-in-law and son-in-law — which forbade their speaking, looking at each other, or being in the same tent — existed among the Gros Ventre. There was, however, no father-in-law taboo. The mother-in-law taboo extended to the son-in-law's brother.

584 If a woman did not wish a man for her lover, she might send him to do a 721 certain act of bravery. If he returned successfully from war, having accomplished the deed, he was then accepted. This custom is said to have led to the death of many young men.

428 At a person's death his property was inherited generally by his relatives. His father and mother, brothers, sisters, and children would receive part. His father and mother received the most. A man often disposed of his property before his death. If he died suddenly, as on being killed in war, his parents divided his property. It was not customary for a man on going to war to divide his property among his relatives in the contingency of his [764] death. Property particularly valued by the dead person was buried with him.

[1] Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. XVIII, Part I, pp. 9, 180.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

CHAPTER VI

KINSHIP BEHAVIOR

Much of the more formalized behavior expected between particular categories of relatives among the Gros Ventres has survived the many changes in their economic, political, and religious structure. It is one of the few aspects of their older culture which can be observed as functioning at least partially. Although the economic side of the obligations has had to be reduced markedly under modern conditions, the attitudes accompanying avoidance and joking are still deeply ingrained in those of middle age and in older persons.

All in all, the type of behavior which indicated respect was extended to include by far the greatest number of relationships,—freedom being allowed only between those individuals considered to be related as grandparents and grandchildren, as siblings of the same sex, and as in-laws of opposite sex but of the same generation.

Parents

The parent-child relationship was characterized by a kind of reserve that tabooed any light talk, especially joking about sex or marriage. If the subject were approached in a serious way, however, it could be discussed between parent and child of like sex. A woman could, for instance, go to her divorced or widowed mother and tell her: "So-and-so wants you, will you not go and live with that man?" But she would not think of acting as intermediary in such a proposal to her father.

Throughout life children were supposed to address and to refer to their parents only by relationship terms,[1] never by personal name. Further, a son would be shamed by any incident even remotely connected with sex, in which he was involved, should it be

[1] The kinship terminology given by our informants agrees in detail with that in Kroeber, 1902, p. 9.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

593 alluded to or occur in the presence of either his father or mother.
[291] To appear unclothed in each other's presence would be embarrassing to father and son alike. A woman refrained from any conversation or action that would call the attention of her father to the fact that she was menstruating or pregnant. An example of the
[845] attitude in this regard came to attention recently. "A woman, who was walking along the road near her house one evening, suffered a miscarriage. Instead of being taken to her own house nearby she insisted on being taken to a neighbor's, her reason being that her father and a few of his friends had been at her home when she had left and she would be 'ashamed' to appear in front of him in her condition."

It would seem that in some ways mothers had closer ties with their daughters and fathers with their sons. If, for example, parents disagreed about something their children did, each took up for the child of like sex. A man said to his wife: "You leave the boy alone, he's *my* boy," and a woman would say the same regarding the daughter. Or had a child done something to disgrace the parents, the wife was likely to upbraid her husband, if a boy were the culprit, by telling him: "Your son did so-and-so!" Should
[597] the daughter have been at fault, her father would speak in similar vein to his wife. In cases of adoption, too, a woman claimed a girl and a man, a boy.

On the other hand, in circumstances where parents could publicly show pride in their children, it often happened that a woman gave presents away in honor of her son and a man in honor of his daughter. It was customary, too, that if a young man had done something especially noteworthy at war, anyone could approach his mother and ask for whatever was wanted, and she would give it. Middle-aged women, whose sons were in World War II, joked with each other along these lines when news of their sons came from the front. Unfortunately, however, adverse economic circumstances precluded the full carrying out of the custom.

604 Attitudes of respect and reserve between parents and children
601 are extended to include all of parents' siblings and their spouses, special emphasis being put on father's sister and mother's brother. Kinship terms reflect this situation. The term "father" includes father's brother, male cousin, mother's sister's husband; "mo-

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

ther" includes mother's sister, female cousin, father's brother's wife. This was neatly illustrated in an instance given by Mary Ereaux. "My mother's cousin's husband came to my house a few weeks ago and wanted to ask me something about arrangements for the pop concession at the Fair. It was a matter of serious business and he and I stood, each looking in a different direction, talking only about the matter in hand. After he had left, my son-in-law, who is not an Indian, and who does not understand the Gros Ventre language, said: 'Mother, you looked as though you were mad at that man.' So I told him: 'In the Indian way, that man would be the same as my father, because his wife would be in the same relation to me as my mother, so we never talk unless necessary and never look at each other while talking.'"

The term "aunt" is reserved for father's sister and female cousins, and "uncle" for mother's brother and male cousins. Here, too, heightened reserve characterized the cross-sex relationship. "A man would not address his 'aunt' directly unless by chance she would be the only one there and he needed information. He would under no circumstances linger to make conversation with her. The same for a woman and her 'uncle.'"

Parents-in-law

The respect between members of the opposite sex who are of contiguous generations was most apparent in the avoidance between mother-in-law and son-in-law. This required that the two neither look at nor speak to each other at any time. It was stated that some men disregarded these rules after the death of the wife, "but most used to keep them all the time." There was one case mentioned in which the son-in-law of a very old woman told his wife: "Your mother is getting very old now. We won't see each other much longer anyway. It would be all right for your mother to come in to our lodge." Both Coming Daylight and Singer insisted nevertheless that, should such a proposal be made, the son-in-law would be the one to make the initiative, never the mother-in-law.

The avoidance between father-in-law and daughter-in-law was almost as strictly observed, in that a woman could not look directly at her father-in-law when she spoke to him, and she did not

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

in-law to do anything of the kind for her mother-in-law. So I gave that daughter-in-law two horses." 606

Although economic obligations were not incumbent, the relationship terms were used, and avoidances practiced, between parents-in-law and the brothers and sisters of the man and wife respectively. It was explained: "The brothers of a man respected his mother-in-law because in the old days it could happen that if a man died his brother might take the wife. And the same with a woman, because they had the custom of giving all the girls in a family to the same man if they liked him." [587]

Siblings of Opposite Sex

Among members of the same generation, the most marked respect was exhibited between siblings of opposite sex, and was extended to include all cousins. There was no relationship term for "cousin," all using sibling terms of address and without distinguishing between parallel- and cross-cousins. 593 605 [601]

Since a girl was removed from her own family at an early age and was brought up in a different household, actual face-to-face contact between brothers and sisters was slight. Nevertheless, their attitudes toward each other had important consequences with many ramifications. As interpreted by the Gros Ventres, the basic relationship between siblings of opposite sex gave clues to understanding expected behavior in several other categories of kinship, —in the avunculate and amitate, as well as in the relations between in-laws of the same sex and generation.

If it could possibly be avoided, brother and sister did not speak to nor look directly at each other. They communicated through a third person. Gros Ventres, who are today in middle age, explained how embarrassed they were as children when the authorities did not understand "the proper way of doing things." For instance, the good sisters and priests in charge of St Paul's, which at that time was a boarding-school, insisted as a privilege for the boys that they visit their sisters on Sunday afternoons in the girls' part of the school! How deeply this feeling of respect penetrates was brought home to the present author by the following incident. "One day she was with Mary and Coming Daylight, while waiting for Charles Buckman, who was to drive her to another part of the

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

604 that the wife of a maternal uncle may likewise claim his nephew as "son-in-law."[8]

Brothers-in-law and Sisters-in-law

607 The mutual regard between brother and sister is said to have been reflected not only through the carrying out of the obligations of the avunculate and amitate in the spirit of "showing how much brothers and sisters thought of each other." It could also be seen in the type of behavior expected between brothers-in-law on the one hand, and sisters-in-law on the other. Brothers-in-law were generous to each other and could joke lightly with each other, but nothing even remotely connected with sex could be so much as mentioned in each other's presence. A man was circumspect in regard to his sister's husband out of respect for his sister, and to his wife's brother because the latter, out of respect for his own sister, had similar obligations toward him. Sisters-in-law behaved toward each other in like fashion. These attitudes were extended to include wife's brother's wife as "sister," rather than "sister-in-law," and husband's sister's husband as "brother."

Unmarried brothers of a man and wife likewise regarded themselves as brothers-in-law. A case which well illustrates the attitudes between them is the following as told by The Boy. "My older brother was married to Thick's older sister and we two young unmarried brothers-in-law experienced a most embarrassing situation. One of us was visiting a woman at night and the other came to the same woman, not realizing in the dark that his brother-in-law was already there. We recognized each other's voices, however, and the one who arrived last beat a hasty retreat. The matter has never, even to this day, been discussed nor so much as indirectly alluded to between us, and the embarrassment over this event led us to avoid each other for a considerable time thereafter. Eventually our relationship was deepened inasmuch as Thick married my sister. Even though my sister should die, Thick and I would continue to be brothers-in-law on the same plane."

[8] Kroeber, 1902, p. 10, calls attention to the identity of terms for "niece" and "daughter-in-law." Apparently a woman used the term "son-in-law" for her niece's husband or for her husband's nephew only if presents were given.